HELPS·FOR STUDENTS OF·HISTORY·

# THE CARE OF DOCUMENTS

CHARLES JOHNSON

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[*Continued on p.* 3.

# THE CARE OF DOCUMENTS

## AND MANAGEMENT OF ARCHIVES

HELPS FOR STUDENTS OF HISTORY. No. 5

EDITED BY C. JOHNSON, M.A., AND J. P. WHITNEY, B.D., D.C.L.

# THE CARE OF DOCUMENTS AND MANAGEMENT OF ARCHIVES

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23 Rue Vavin,
Paris - 1922.

LONDON
SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING
CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE
1919

# THE CARE OF DOCUMENTS
## AND MANAGEMENT OF ARCHIVES

### What are "Archives"?

The Greek word *ἀρχεῖον*, from which, through the late Latin *archium* or *archivum*, our term "archives" is derived, meant in the first instance the residence of the chief magistrate, and secondarily the collection of official documents stored there. By a legitimate extension of the term, we may regard as archives any series of documents arising in the ordinary course of business and put away for future reference. The term will thus cover things as dissimilar in character as the records of a court of law, the "cabinet" of a Secretary of State, the "archives" of a legation, the disused books and papers of a business house, or the correspondence of a private person. Any of these is an "archive," and the person charged with the custody and production of the documents composing it is an "archivist," even though the collection be a small one and the documents of no great antiquity.

Thus Parish Registers and Churchwardens' Accounts, or the records of a Burial Board or a Water Company, may fairly be regarded as "archives" within the meaning of this paper.

It is, however, generally agreed that documents still in current use are not "archives," and only become so when they have been put away as completed. They are "dead" papers, and the archivist may be more properly classed with the palæontologist or the anatomist than with the physiologist. But it is of the essence of the matter that these documents—that is, each mass or group of them proceeding from a single source—were once living. They are organic, being the secretions, as it were, of an organism, and reflecting in their ordered succession the characteristics and the history of the organisation which produced them.

Archives are thus to be distinguished, on the one hand, from documents in current use, and, on the other, both from fortuitous collections of manuscripts, and from those which, like collections of autographs or of historical materials, are brought together by causes external to the circumstances of their production. We thus arrive at the following definition:

*Archives consist of one or more groups of documents no longer in current use, each group of which has accrued in the custody of an individual or a department in the ordinary course of business, and*

*forms an organic whole, reflecting the organisation and history of the office which produced it. The subsequent transfer of such custody does not affect the definition.*

Any such group may contain subordinate groups arising either from branches of the organisation producing it, or from other organisations to whose rights and duties the first has succeeded, or whose archives it has acquired.

Thus, for instance, the records of a Government department include those of its branches, and also those of temporary commissions which issue from it, and deposit their records with it on expiry, and those of previously existing departments to whose work it has succeeded.

In this way the records of the Local Government Board include those of the old Poor Law Commissioners. In like manner the records of a County Council will include those of its committees, and of the Quarter Sessions, Highway Boards, or other bodies to whose work it has succeeded. Similarly, the records of a new borough will include those of the Urban Sanitary Authority which preceded it.

The nature of the documents thus arising is determined by that of the organisation producing them. There is usually some principal series to which the others are subsidiary. A court of law has its roll or register of decisions; a board or

committee its minutes; a financially responsible body has its annual accounts; a secretariat has its entry-books and its files of letters received; an official has his registers. Such a series we call the "main record," and the nature of this series depends on that of the main business of the department producing it. A large department may give rise to series of all the classes mentioned, but these are not necessarily of equal importance, being co-ordinate with, or subordinate to, each other according to the positions occupied by the offices producing them in the whole organisation to which they belong. A concrete example of this may be taken from the records of the Board of Trade and Plantations which preceded the Colonial Office in the administration of the British Colonies. Here the main record is the series of volumes of the minutes of the Board. The correspondence is arranged by subjects under letters and numbers, and these letters and numbers are posted in the margin of the minutes, so that it is easy to refer from the decisions of the Board to the materials upon which they are based. The rolls or books of a criminal court are similarly based on the calendars of prisoners brought before them, and the files of indictments or summonses. Those of a civil court are related in the same way to the writs by which cases are brought before them, and the pleadings filed by the parties. The examination

of any group of records which has not been subjected to destructive rearrangement will give similar results. A series of accounts, as finally audited, can be traced backwards through the subordinate books of account to the files of vouchers and warrants which constitute their justification. A monastic cartulary is the key to the bundles of deeds registered in it. Each group of records is thus an articulate whole, the meaning of which is lost if its natural arrangement is disturbed.

### Principles of Arrangement.

The principles upon which archives should be arranged are based, for modern archivists, on the foregoing view of their nature. The various uses—historical, genealogical, economic, or legal—to which they may be put are, to the archivist, a secondary consideration. His first concern is with the documents themselves, and his first care to guard against their destruction or confusion in the real or imagined interest of any of the studies which they are capable of serving. It may be added that the rules suggested are the outcome of the accumulated experience of many archivists, British and foreign. The first broad principle which can be laid down is:

*The original grouping of the documents must be preserved.*

This principle, known in other countries as that of *respect des fonds*, was laid down in 1841 by the French archivist De Wailly to prevent further disarrangement of the national archives which had suffered much in consequence of the system of classification instituted by Daunou in 1794. In Germany, where it is now generally recognised as fundamental, it is called the *Provenienz-Prinzip*, or "principle of origin." To anyone who has experience of documents in bulk, it is self-evident. Unhappily the recognition of this truth usually arises from the consideration of the effects of other systems which ought never to have been adopted.

For the sake of illustration we may note a few of the consequences of this principle. For instance:

A letter and its draft cannot normally belong to the same group, and ought not, therefore, to be classed together. A moment's reflection will show that the draft is filed by the sender of the letter, and so forms a part of the group of documents accruing in his office; while the letter, unless it is cancelled or returned, will form part of the archives of the receiver. Thus, for example, the drafts of the letters sent by the Secretary of the Admiralty to the Navy Board are part of the Secretary's records, while the letters themselves are part of the records of the Navy Board. It is obvious that these two series cannot be combined

or fused in any way without destroying the history of both. The same considerations apply to the correspondence of a Borough or County Council with the officials working under its directions, or the independent authorities with which it transacts business.

In the same way the determination of the proper place of a document which has escaped from its original group depends on the nature of the document and the certainty, or the reverse, with which we can say in what hands it would remain at the conclusion of its active career. Thus, a warrant for a payment, after being satisfied and cancelled, may be presumed to have either remained in the hands of the paying office, or have been transmitted by it to the auditors and retained by them. The existence or absence of similar documents in one of the two possible groups will usually show which of these was the normal course. A further consequence is the rule that—

*No scheme of arrangement can be fixed until the whole group of documents has been examined and its original relations understood.*

The object of this rule is to prevent the loss or falsification of the history of the documents by premature arrangement.

### Method of Procedure.

We will assume, in the first instance, that the archivist is dealing with an untouched collection of documents, either in its original place of deposit or after a simple removal. The first task is to examine whether the documents are in order or not. If they are, the various classes must be examined and described successively, without any attempt at rearrangement, until their nature and relations are completely understood. When this is done, a logical inventory can be prepared and the documents packed. So long as the articulation of the group is made clear in the inventory, the documents may be placed on the shelves in any order which practical convenience may dictate. Furthermore, any class may be subdivided for the purpose of convenient reference so long as its original arrangement is not obscured.

For the purpose of such a logical arrangement the first step is to settle which is the "main record" of the group. It will frequently consist in a well-defined series of volumes or rolls, such as the minutes of a board, or the accounts of an institution. If references are found in these main series to other classes, the latter can be arranged as subordinate series in the way which is indicated by the references. No motives of convenience should ever be allowed to interfere with the ready

use of such original references. The actual arrangement to be adopted depends, of course, on the nature of the materials. Thus, the minutes of a board will naturally be followed by the files of letters received or petitions which give rise to them, and the entry books or drafts of letters sent, reports, and memoranda, to which they give rise. Should the board be an accounting body, there will be a second "main record"—the periodical accounts. Under these must be grouped the warrants for payments, receipts, and other vouchers, and all the intermediate books or statements of account which lead up to the final account presented for audit. If the accounting branch of the board has an office and correspondence of its own, this must be grouped under the same "main record," and not with the general correspondence of the board. The same system must be followed down to the smallest subdivision of the organisation, so that a glance at the scheme of arrangement will show the exact image of the department which produced the documents and their interdependence on each other.

We have assumed that the main series with which we have to deal are uniform in character. But this is by no means invariably the case. It may happen that the constitution and functions of a department is changed by a definite administrative order, that a single Minister is re-

placed by a board, or a whole group of matters brought into or removed from the competence of the office. In such cases the main series must either be divided into sections, or a new series must be formed beginning with the change of constitution. The course to be adopted will usually depend on the extent of the change in the form of the main record. Thus, if a minute-book recording the proceedings of a board replaces a mere letter-book, a new series must clearly be begun. If the only change is in the nature of the business transacted, a subdivision of the series is all that is necessary.

It will be found convenient to give each series of documents a class number, showing its place in the "block" or group of documents to which it belongs. Each group, including all the series proceeding from the same source, can be given a group letter; and the individual volumes, files, or bundles of the series can be numbered consecutively. Each "piece" will then bear three marks, by which its place can be instantly identified. Thus a volume marked, say, P. ii. 35, is characterised as follows: P., Records of the Food Control Committee; ii., minutes; 35, the thirty-fifth volume of the series. This at once makes the writing of a demand for the volume easier, and makes it less likely that it will be misplaced when it is returned to the shelves.

When the original classification of the documents is thus established and recorded, it may be found that it is not sufficiently elaborate for purposes of reference, and that further subdivision is required. In this case a further rule must be laid down:

*No original volume, file, or bundle must be broken up until its nature and principle of arrangement is understood and recorded.*

It may well be imagined that in many cases original files of documents, with no clue to their contents beyond the rough indications of date obtainable from the order of filing, may include a certain number of important papers embedded in a vast waste of rubbish. In such a case no useful purpose is served by retaining the original arrangement. The documents of a purely formal nature may be separated from the others, and may even be destroyed; while the selected documents can be given separate numbers, and thus made easier to refer to. But if this is done, the greatest care must be taken not to lose any evidence afforded by the original arrangement. Thus, for instance, we may assume a file of vouchers to an account, consisting, for the most part, of receipts for money spent and of formal warrants for expenditure, all of the same kind and only differing in date. Among these we find an undated letter, containing interesting news or other historically useful

matter. If we remove this letter from its place, we must take care to record that it formed one of the vouchers of a particular account; and that from its place on the file, between vouchers of such and such dates, it was presumably received at a certain time by the person among whose vouchers it was found.

The case is more complicated when the original file or bundle consists of documents the connexion of which with each other is not obvious. In such a case we cannot supply the information which alone can justify the breaking up of the file. If we take out the documents which appear to us of interest, it will never again be possible to explain whence they came, or how they happened to be preserved. The solution of such problems as that of the real relation of documents found together, though having no apparent connexion, is one of the most delicate tasks which the archivist has to perform. I cannot resist giving this example from the " Manual " of Drs. Müller, Feith, and Fruin.

Among a number of miscellaneous documents in the State Archives of Utrecht was found a quire of paper containing copies of private deeds of the greatest variety—titles to property, deeds of purchase, deeds of gift, testaments, partitions—besides collations to chaplaincies and other ecclesiastical benefices. They were all of approximately the same date—the middle of the sixteenth cen-

tury—but not in chronological order. Here was a puzzle! Fortunately, someone remembered having seen a volume in the same archives with similar contents; it was entitled, *Tituli ordinandorum exhibiti*. Here was the explanation. As is well known, candidates for ordination must exhibit what is known as a "title"—that is, evidence that, if they are ordained, they will either have a benefice or curacy on the income of which they can live, or else property of their own sufficient to prevent the scandal of their begging in the streets. These were the documents which showed that the candidates had property or benefices, and were registered by the bishop who ordained them in case his conduct in doing so should be called in question. This solution made it possible to substitute a simple description in the inventory for what must otherwise have been a laborious catalogue of all the documents.

But supposing, as is much more likely, the archives taken over are in disorder?

Here the first thing to aim at is to establish the main series. Get all the bound volumes, rolls, or unbroken files sorted out from the chaos; then examine them one by one, numbering each with a temporary number, and writing on slips of paper—which ought to be of uniform size, bearing corresponding numbers—short descriptions of each. It will be found wise to arrange that the same class

of information comes in the same place on each slip. Thus, for instance, the temporary number at the left-hand top corner, the dates covered at the right; the nature of the contents in the centre of the slip; the material and language at the left-hand bottom corner; the condition of the document at the right. So long as the system is uniform, the exact plan is best left to the person who has to carry it out; but it is worth remembering that an arrangement in columns is usually wasteful. Time may be saved by placing together, before numbering, any series which appear from their external marks, such as binding, to be closely connected. Classification can then be begun, the descriptive slips which appear to be of the same type being arranged in chronological series, and the gaps or duplications noted. This preliminary arrangement of the slips affords an opportunity of making sure that similar series are not being confused. At this point it should be possible to establish the nature of the various series, and discover whether or not they are complete, and what are their relations to each other. After this the volumes, etc., which do not at first seem to belong to any series can be re-examined, and many of them will probably fall into their places. The rest must be left over for more exact inquiry.

We have now to determine, from the evidence of the documents themselves, whether or not they all

proceed from the same office. If, as is most likely, they are found to be an amalgamation of different groups, the groups must be distinguished as already explained. It will then be possible to deal with the miscellanea, assigning them to the groups and series from which they have become detached; those which cannot be certainly assigned must be separately described.

The task becomes more difficult when the documents do not proceed directly from a department or office, but are the contents of a record repository which have already been partly arranged, and the sources of which are not accurately determined. Here the greatest care must be taken not to alter the existing arrangement, otherwise documents which have been used or printed may be completely lost. If the arrangement is a bad one, a rational arrangement should be made on paper. If it is then found necessary to rearrange the documents themselves, accurate lists must be made, by means of which any document can be found of which the old reference is known. The preparation of such "keys" is very laborious, but it is not safe to destroy the old arrangement until they have been made. It should be the invariable rule to stamp all documents proceeding from the same repository or office with a distinguishing mark, so that no question can ever arise as to the source from which they were derived.

### Housing.

Where a special repository can be built, which is always the best plan, it should be fireproof, and strong enough to secure the contents from any attempt at burglary. The windows should either be sash windows, or should open outwards, and should be large enough for packages to be loaded through them, should hasty removal be imperative, into vans waiting below. A lift should be provided for passengers and goods. The building should be isolated, and communicate with the work-rooms and search-rooms by a covered passage, with iron doors kept locked at night. Where heating is necessary, it should be done by hot-water pipes from a furnace without the building. There should be a night-watchman, and telephonic communication with the fire brigade and with the archivist on duty. The most economical plan is to build the whole repository as a single block, either as an iron stack within the stone or brick shell, like the Dublin Record Office or the book-stores of the London Library, or else dividing it into fireproof floors, each consisting of a single room. In this way no space is wasted on corridors and doors, and the whole floor can be filled with cases extending right across it, with a central passage and a narrow passage on each side between the cases and the windows. Access to all the floors

can be obtained by an external staircase and lift. The floors should be a little more than seven feet apart, so that the top shelf of each case can be reached without using a ladder. The cases should be at right angles to the windows, and not too near them, so that the sunlight may not fall directly on the documents. The cases should be of ironwork, and far enough apart to secure efficient lighting. At Antwerp the shelves are of *béton armé*, a kind of reinforced concrete, which is very easily kept clean. Where the packages are for the most part of uniform size, money can be saved by using fixed shelves, but a certain proportion must be movable. Footrails or steps should be provided, running along the line of the lowest shelves, to enable men under the normal height to get documents down from the upper shelves, and there should be tables or stands on wheels to make it easy for the archivist to carry out a search in the repository. There should also be trucks for the transport of the packages.

The outer shell of the building should be solid, and, in view of the development of aircraft attack in modern war, the roof and floors should be of concrete. If artificial light is used, it should be electric light, the wiring being taken in iron pipes. The hydrants for use in case of fire, and the ordinary water-supply, should, like the staircase and lift, be outside the repository. Damp and dust are the

greatest enemies of records. Efficient ventilation will prevent damp, and for this it is only needful to have enough windows, and to open them regularly every fine day. Dust is best dealt with by choosing a site well away from smoke and traffic. Where this is impossible, the windows which are opened can be provided with screens of woven wire, and the cases for the more precious documents can have doors with canvas panels. In the London Public Record Office a vacuum cleaner is installed, and the whole building is systematically cleaned—a small portion every day. Each section of cases is in the same way repainted in its turn, the documents being moved to a new place and repacked. The packing is thus steadily improved. Where documents which bear consecutive numbers in the inventory cannot be packed in the same order, special coloured labels are employed showing the actual order on the shelves. These numbers are never used for the purpose of describing the documents, and merely show whether or not they are all in their proper places.

### Packing.

The actual arrangement of the documents on the shelves is a different matter from their classification. Whereas in classification the preservation and reconstitution of the natural groups is of the

first importance, in packing the place of the various groups on the shelves is a pure matter of convenience. The groups most in use will, of course, be put in the most accessible places. The actual arrangement of the documents will thus differ widely from the numerical order of the classes in the inventory. It is consequently necessary to hang up in each room, or attach to each press, a large label or card showing the class-numbers of the groups placed in it, and the number of packages or volumes in each group. This makes it possible to see at a glance whether or not anything is missing. Corresponding pressmarks must be entered in the inventory, so that any group can readily be found when wanted. The archivist must make a regular and systematic inspection of all the presses to see that their contents are in order, and that the documents are not suffering from damp or dust.

Besides these general precautions, special steps must be taken for the safety of documents which, from their size or character, are liable to injury if left in their original places. These must be removed and packed separately, their places being marked by cards showing the places to which they have been transferred. Such are deeds with seals, maps and plans, and large documents which are likely to suffer from being folded if they are left with the smaller ones to which they relate.

Parchment deeds are best packed flat when possible, otherwise the writing may be damaged at the folds. If they are too large for this, they should be flattened and folded once or twice at the most, care being taken not to repeat the old folding; several can then be placed in one large cardboard box. Documents with valuable seals should have separate boxes; but when the seals are not of special value, it will be enough to separate them by sheets of paper, so that the seals do not knock against each other and chip. Another plan, which succeeds well with small deeds, is to put each deed in a separate numbered envelope, and pack several of these envelopes of the same size in a cardboard box. Seals should not be wrapped in cotton-wool, as they are less likely to perish if the air has free access to them.

Large documents can be packed flat in parcels between millboards. Here care must be taken that the strings securing the parcels do not cut the millboards and fray the edges of the documents. For this reason webbing straps are better than cords. The strings or bands securing the parcels must never be tied in a knot; a bow should be used which will come loose on simply pulling one of the ends.

Maps and plans which are too large to be packed in this way can be rolled up and placed in cardboard tubes, a special case being reserved for them.

Such things as matrices of seals, dies for coins, knives or other objects attached to deeds for the purpose of giving livery of seisin, must, of course, be packed in special boxes.

For the general run of documents such special treatment is impossible, and for the packing of long series plans must be devised which would be much too rough for single documents. Here the form is the governing factor.

*Books*, whether on paper or parchment, need merely be placed in order on the shelves, close enough to support each other, but not so close as to be squeezed or rubbed in the act of replacing them.

*Parchment* documents, without seals, can be pasted to parchment or cloth guards, and made up in files of about fifty. The files may have cloth or buckram covers and flaps to keep out the dust, and should be tied round with tapes at the opposite end from the filing for the same purpose. A better, but more expensive, plan is to inlay them in larger sheets of paper, and bind the sheets into volumes. Buckram slip-cases can be used to protect the volumes from dust, and the same plan can be adopted for the more valuable books.

*Rolls*, whether of parchment or of paper, are a difficult problem. The writing inevitably suffers from constant rolling and unrolling, and even with the greatest care the edges are inclined to fray.

The plan of taking them to pieces and binding them up flat, apart from its inherent vandalism, is inapplicable on a large scale. The most that can be done is to provide each roll with a parchment or buckram cover, slightly wider than the roll, and to pack several rolls together in a cardboard box. For large rolls, of course, the cover must suffice. If care is taken to roll them evenly and tightly, they keep out the dust very well. A central roller of wood or cardboard may be used to prevent dust from penetrating into the middle of the roll.

*Letters* and other papers of uniform size can be attached to paper guards and bound up in volumes. If this is carefully done, and the volumes not squeezed into their shelves, the wafer-seals *en placard* will not be injured. Care must, however, be taken that they do not come off owing to the wax perishing. Any that are unsafe should be gummed on again. Here again buckram cases can be used to keep the dust from getting in between the rough edges of the papers.

Where time and expense forbid even these measures, the only plan is to pack the papers or parchments as flat as possible between millboards, and tie them up in wrappers of glazed cloth, or at least strong brown paper. On no account should they be rolled up and tied with string, which is almost certain to cut the edges, and makes it

difficult to examine them without getting them out of order.

Care must be taken that no package is too large to be taken down easily by one man from the highest shelf. This is especially important, where it might happen that archives had to be removed hurriedly on account of danger from fire.

### Cleaning and Repairing.

Parchment and paper documents which are dirty and crumpled, but otherwise sound, can be brushed and dusted, and then damped and flattened under pressure. Those which are decayed must be repaired. When only one side of the document is written on, this is simple enough. A new piece of thin parchment (the "face" of which must be roughed to remove the greasy surface) or paper is pasted on the back, the broken pieces being arranged upon it in their proper positions. If the new backing is too thick, and the document must be rolled or folded, the stiffness of the backing will cause the surface to break in fresh places. For this reason the material used must be as thin and flexible as possible. Where both sides are written on, the task is more delicate. Fine strips of parchment can be pasted between the lines, but it is usually more satisfactory to cover one or both sides with a transparent *mousseline de soie*, through which the writing will be

legible. This is very much better than the earlier devices of mending with tracing-paper or gold-beater's skin, which ultimately becomes opaque and obscures the writing. The muslin is particularly successful with paper documents, the fine threads sinking into the surface of the paper and becoming almost invisible. Ragged edges can be made good by cutting parchment or paper to fit them, and thus supplying a new edge. Here also the edge of the new parchment which is pasted to the document must be thinned down. Paper is "torn" so as to get a thin edge of the proper shape, a special quality being used. Both paper and parchment documents can be inlaid in cartridge paper mounts, as already described. All this work should be entrusted to a skilled bookbinder who has been specially trained in repairing, and can carry it out in connexion with the necessary bookbinding. Flour paste, not thick, to which a little alum has been added, is the best adhesive.

Papers that require stiffening may be sized. Size is made by boiling down some parchment cuttings, or may be bought ready made. It is applied by means of a fitch.

In the Prussian archives documents are treated with a solution of collodion in amyl acetate, which presumably forms a varnish, but I have no experience of the results of this plan, which seems to be

borrowed from the process used commercially in making "patent leather."

The greatest care must be taken in repairing to avoid covering up any writing, or obliterating any marks which may throw light on the history of the documents.

### Reagents.

Faded writing can be restored by the use of a solution of gallic acid. This combines with the iron of the ink, and restores its blackness. An alkaline solution stains the parchment, and this process is unfortunately progressive. The following formula will be found fairly satisfactory, but it is safest not to use a reagent unless the document is to be printed or a copy of it preserved.

| | By Weight. |
|---|---|
| Gallic acid solution (B.P.) .. | 1 part. |
| Distilled water .. .. | 100 parts. |

The effect of gallic acid is permanent; that of ammonium sulphide, which is sometimes used, is temporary. It succeeds best with paper documents.

### Production.

The production of documents to the public, and their use by searchers, involve certain elementary precautions against loss or damage. A room should

be provided with a raised seat for the archivist in charge, from which he can overlook what is being done. The use of ink for copying or taking notes should only be permitted in the case of bound volumes which can be placed on a reading stand. Valuable documents should be further protected by a glass case from accidental splashes of ink. Rolls and unbound documents which have to be laid on the table should be copied in indelible pencil. If ink is used, some is certain to be spilled on the table, and thus transferred to the documents laid on it. There is seldom room in a public search-room for the plan which can be adopted by the archivist in his study of placing the document on the left of his desk, and keeping his ink and pens on its right. Even so accidents sometimes happen; but where space is limited, they are inevitable if ink is used. No tracing of signatures or drawings should be permitted without the express leave of the archivist in charge, who will see that a soft pencil is used, and that the document is strong enough to run no risk of damage.

To avoid losing documents, a register should be kept of all documents produced, and these should be written off as replaced. The searcher should sign a ticket for the document he wishes to see, and the ticket should be numbered to correspond with the register, and retained by the archivist till the document is returned to him. The register

must be examined and cleared at regular intervals, so that it can at all times be seen what documents are in use. A card with the register number should be written by the archivist, and placed on the shelf or in the box from which the document is taken. In a large establishment, where documents must be passed from hand to hand, a receipt should be given at each transfer, so that it can be determined in whose hands it was last. The number of documents which each searcher may have in his hands at a time must be strictly limited, and no searcher should be allowed to leave the search-room until he has received the application slips which he gave for the documents he has used. Care must be taken that the production of the documents is not hurried, otherwise there is great risk that they may be damaged or misplaced. Special precautions are necessary in the case of documents with seals or in a bad state of repair, and the archivist in charge should have absolute discretion to refuse to produce any document which cannot be used without damage.

### Means of Reference.

The means of reference which should be provided by an efficient archive administration are of three kinds: General descriptions, inventories, and calendars.

*General Descriptions or "Guides."*—Every repository of documents should have a general description of its contents, showing their approximate extent, their nature, and the sources from which they are derived. When an artificial arrangement has been adopted at any time in the history of the collection, its system must be explained, and the extent to which the natural order of the documents has been destroyed should be stated. The public should know what kind of information is obtainable, and the purposes for which the documents were originally produced. Without such a guide it is hardly possible to avoid erroneous inferences from the actual contents of the documents. Thus, for example, the facts stated in the legal record of a "common recovery" bear no relation to the actual import of the proceedings. The uninstructed searcher must be warned that the whole of the ostensible proceedings are fictitious, and that the object of the action is as often as not a mere piece of conveyancing.

*Inventories.*—Such a point may perhaps be considered too detailed for a general description, and be reserved for the preface to the inventory or list of the class. Every class must have such a list, if only to protect its contents from loss. The main thing to remember in drawing up such a list is that it is not intended to give any information about the contents of the several docu-

ments composing the class. Each class should be described in such a way that there can be no mistake as to the nature of the documents and the purpose for which they were drawn up, but without making any attempt to deal with the information contained in them, or to dispense the inquirer from consulting the documents themselves. Thus a series of volumes or files will be included under a general statement, without any attempt to indicate the contents of any member of the series. If the character of the series changes at a given date, this must be indicated by subdividing it. Miscellaneous documents which do not fall into series must be described separately, but in such a way as to show what each document is, not what it contains. Each section will thus consist of—(1) The old title or heading, if known; (2) a general description of the document or group; (3) the number of volumes, files, or pieces; (4) the dates covered; (5) notes of any documents included in the class which differ in character from the rest, and which, consequently, present unexpected sources of information. This can best be done by means of footnotes.

In a printed inventory, intended for publication, it will not be necessary to give the detailed numeration of the pieces of a consecutive series. It is enough to indicate the years covered, and what gaps, if any, there are in the series. The manu-

script inventory, for use in the archives, should contain a complete list, showing the number and dates of each piece.

The order of the inventory should be the logical order of the groups and classes of documents to which it relates, regardless of their actual arrangement on the shelves. Continuous series should come before isolated documents. Where the constitution or character of an institution has undergone changes at definite dates, its records should be divided into corresponding chronological groups. Inventories should never be drawn up in tabular form. It wastes space, and raises the cost of printing, besides hampering the archivist who has to make his descriptions conform to the table. The sections of the inventory should be distinguished by a carefully thought out system of letters and numbers. It is a good plan to assign a continuous series of Arabic numbers to the classes comprised in the inventory as a whole, to indicate the main groups or departments by capital letters, the sections of each group by Roman numerals, and the descriptive subdivisions of each class by italic letters.

The degree of fullness with which each class should be described depends mainly on its date, the earlier series usually needing more elaborate description. The place of each piece in the series is determined by the date of the document to

which it owes its inclusion in the series, not that of the earliest document contained in it. Series of accounts, however, should be dated by the years to which they refer, and not by those at which they were audited.

The treatment of subordinate groups of documents, such as the reports of commissions or committees, depends mainly on their extent. If the body is a permanent one, or assumes sufficient importance to have minutes and proceedings of its own, it should have a separate number in the inventory, otherwise its report must be treated as subsidiary to the records of the authority from which it issues and to which it reports.

It will be found convenient to combine the arrangement of the records with the preparation of the inventory, using the same numbered slips for both purposes. When the inventory is complete, descriptive labels corresponding with it should be attached to the documents, so that no question can arise as to what they are, or where they should be placed. Documents which are packed separately on account of their form, such as original charters, maps, and plans, etc., should be described in the inventory in their logical connexion with the series to which they belong, and not in a separate section. A reference to their actual arrangement can be given in brackets.

Documents which are not "records"—such as

treatises on the history of different offices, copies of missing documents, or compilations for historical or other purposes—should not be included in the inventory, but relegated to an appendix.

When documents are known to have been printed, the reference should be given in the inventory, and also on the labels of the documents. The possibility of doing this depends on the degree of detail to which the inventory descends. When selected documents are printed from a long series, this can only be indicated in a "calendar." In some cases a footnote to the inventory will serve.

The inventory should always be provided with an index, which will serve as a guide to searchers who have not time to read and study the whole work.

*Calendars.*—Inventories are intended to facilitate access to original documents, and promote the use of them. But in the case of early and valuable records it is often more important to limit the use of them, and to prevent them from being gradually destroyed by constant use. For this purpose provision should always be made for the photographing of all documents which are frequently consulted, and a "photostat," or some other apparatus for the making of cheap photographic copies, should be part of the normal equipment of a well-appointed record office.

But for historical purposes more is required.

There are long periods of history for which the published materials are scanty, although much remains to be drawn from record evidence. This can only be made accessible by means of printing the contents of the documents. Photographs and manuscript copies do not distribute the information sufficiently widely, nor in a sufficiently convenient form, to make progress possible. The more important documents must, of course, be printed in full; the rest must be presented as abstracts, or "regesta," in such a way that the student can obtain all the information which they contain without having to examine the originals, or to take up the palæographical and linguistic studies required for their interpretation. Such a series of abstracts is called a "calendar."

A calendar should be limited to a particular class or group of documents possessing an organic connexion. Thus, for instance, it may comprise the deeds of a given religious house within certain limits of date, a series of accounts, or a collection of diplomatic correspondence. The plan to be adopted varies with the nature of the material.

Let us suppose, for example, that we are dealing with the deeds of a religious house or a private landowner. Here we presumably have a cartulary, possibly more than one, and a collection of loose deeds. We may also have copies of other cartularies and deeds belonging to the same group,

but deposited elsewhere. In strictness the calendar should be limited to the documents actually existing in the archives, either as originals or in a cartulary; but where it is possible to reconstitute the original group by including documents preserved elsewhere, it seems justifiable to do so. The question is a practical one, and should be decided on its merits. In such a case, the documents of general interest—Papal Bulls, Confirmation Charters, and so forth—should be taken first; then the titles to the several pieces of property. Each group should be arranged chronologically. The proper names should be given in their original spelling, and all titles as they occur in the documents, except those of sovereign princes, for whom the principal title will usually suffice. In the case of confirmations or charters of *Vidimus* or *Inspeximus*, the charters inspected should be omitted, a reference being given to the places where they occur in the several chronological series. Each abstract should include—(1) The date of the charter in its modern form, and also as it appears in the document (an approximate date being indicated for undated documents); (2) the place where the charter was issued, with its modern name (if the original form is merely the usual Latin translation of the modern name, it may be omitted); (3) a description of the seals, if any; (4) the nature of the document (original or copy, parchment or paper, in what

language, if and where printed); (5) a note of the other documents attached, or known to have been attached, to the charter.

Each calendar should be provided with an index of persons and places, and also a subject-index.

Correspondence and accounts should be dealt with on similar lines. The object to be aimed at in each case is to give the effect of the document in as few words as possible. When a letter of document is so important that the abstract of it begins to approach a copy or translation, it is better to print it in full. Over-elaboration defeats its own object, and may even lead to the calendaring of a year's correspondence taking more than a year, so that history lags farther and farther behind its materials. It is better to use footnotes for the identification of places and persons than to throw the whole of this work, which cannot safely be omitted, into the index. It is also a mistake to write long historical introductions; the historian should be allowed to make use of the documents for himself. It is not the province of the calendar to anticipate his judgments, even though it be permissible to call attention to the discovery of new groups of facts.

### Qualifications of the Archivist.

From these considerations a few conclusions may be drawn as to the qualities demanded of an archivist. He must be familiar with the languages in which the documents in his custody are written, and the styles of writing employed by their scribes. He must direct his attention to the history and natural relations of the documents themselves without undue preoccupation by any of the purposes—legal, historical, or economic—for which they may be used. He must not be afraid of dirt, nor must he allow any selfish interest to prevent him from communicating the contents of the documents in his charge to those who desire to make use of them. He must therefore renounce historical work on his own account, except as an exercise to keep alive his interest in history and his knowledge of the needs and progress of historical study in those fields in which his documents can be useful. His reward consists in the knowledge of points of detail with which the professional historian has seldom the time or the opportunity to become acquainted, and in the friendship of those who make use of his labours for the forwarding of their respective studies. That is no mean compensation for the renunciations which are demanded by his calling.

## APPENDIX.

### The Sifting of Documents.

The subject of the preservation of documents of historical value is intimately connected, as the reader can hardly have failed to see, with the destruction of those which are not worth keeping. If in the ordinary course of business the wheat and the tares are allowed to accumulate together, a mass of material gradually arises from which it is a hard task to pick out the documents of permanent interest. Moreover, there is, as we have seen, grave danger that the history of the documents selected for preservation may be obscured in the process.

It is therefore to be desired that any authority whose actions give rise to records should, in its current treatment of them, have regard to their ultimate disposal.

The most satisfactory plan is to call in the assistance of the archivist to whose care they will ultimately be committed, and concert with him a scheme for the filing of current papers which shall provide for the regular and systematic destruction, after a stated interval, of all papers the in-

terest of which is purely ephemeral. By this means space is saved, and at the same time the papers of permanent value are kept from being buried in a mass of useless rubbish.

In the case of the public records of this country, the machinery for this is provided by the Public Record Office Act of 1877, and a similar scheme ought to be applied to all documents, public or private, in process of accumulation.

## Terminology.

Drs. Müller, Feith, and Fruin have attempted to establish a uniform system of terms to be used in inventories and calendars. This is, however, too elaborate for the purposes of this paper, and it is difficult to find English equivalents for some of the terms used. The following suggestions seem worth adopting:

"Book" (*livre*) should be reserved for printed books, manuscripts in book form being described as "volumes." These should be distinguished as—(1) Journals (*protocoles*), containing original minutes or proceedings; (2) registers (*registres*), containing copies of acts or letters, both these being volumes in which entries are made as opposed to (3) collections (*recueils*) of bound up papers.

In the same way, (1) files (*dossiers*) of accruing documents are distinguished from (2) bundles

(*liasses*) of documents assembled by the archivist as materials for the consideration of a particular subject, and (3) packets (*filiasses, paquets, enveloppes*), collections made by the archivist of documents of the same nature, or proceeding from the same administration.

A contents-table (*table*) of the documents in the order in which they occur in a volume is distinguished from an index (*index*) consisting of catchwords, or a repertory (*repertoire*) consisting of abstracts of documents, and arranged either alphabetically or systematically in some order differing from that in which the documents occur.

It seems impossible to follow Continental practice in the distinction of the various kinds of drafts of Acts, letters, or accounts. It seems best to restrict the unqualified terms, Act, letter, account, etc., to the document in its authentic form as issued, distinguishing drafts (*concept*), the preliminary stage, of which the minute, or authorised draft, is a special case, and copies, which are subsequent to the authentic document or original, which itself may or may not be an engrossment (*grosse*).

An instrument (*diplome*) is a document in fixed form, intended to prove its own contents.

"Charter," in English usage, is best reserved for a Royal Charter in the strict sense of the word, and not applied, as it often is, to any parchment

instrument. The documents technically described as "Charters of Feoffment" and "Charters of Pardon" belong respectively to the larger classes of "Deeds" and "Letters Patent."

Dates which are arrived at by deduction, and not given in the document, should always be placed between square brackets.

The year should precede the month, and the month the day, and uncertain dates should come after certain ones; thus, 1818, June 25; 1818, June; 1818; [1818] will be the proper order of printing.

Documents covering a period of years should have the years joined by a hyphen; thus, 1818-1820. Those beginning in one year, and ending at a corresponding date in the next, should have the date in the form 1818/19. For the double date the form 1684[-5] is the best, the year not given in the original being in brackets. If both dates are given in the original brackets should not be used, but the following form adopted: 1703/4, Feb. 16/27.

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